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DHS PASS TO RFI/BAROSKI

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SUBJECT: ULFA AND NDFB SUSPECTED IN ASSAM TERRORIST ATTACKS

REF: KOLKATA 302

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Northeastern state of Assam's police special investigation team has unofficially implicated the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) in the October 30 terrorist attacks that killed 86 people. Police suspect external assistance in the planning and execution of the attacks given their complexity and uniqueness in Northeast India; however, they have yet to offer any evidence of support from outside of India. On November 12, the state government requested the federal government's Central Bureau of Investigation to assume responsibility for the ongoing investigation.

¶2. (U) Police contacts have confirmed that the eight bomb blasts in three cities in the state of Assam on October 30 (See Reftel) killed 86 people and injured more than 450. Eleven individuals were injured in the city of Bongaigaon when police unsuccessfully attempted to disarm the explosive device.

Evidence Implicates ULFA and NDFB Involvement

¶3. (SBU) According to Assam Police Special Investigation Team leader R. Chandranathan (protect), police have evidence that implicates both ULFA and NDFB in the blasts. On October 31, a day after the blasts, ULFA sent messages to local media denying its involvement. ULFA has a history of falsely denying involvement in attacks in Assam and is still waging a violent struggle for a sovereign Assam. After the media reported possible NDFB involvement in the attacks on November 10, its leadership also issued a statement denying involvement. NDFB is currently observing a truce with the Government of India (GoI). Post contacts speculate that internal disagreement within the NDFB may explain any faction's possible involvement.

¶4. (SBU) On October 31, an Assam news channel reported that the Islamic Security Force - Indian Mujahideen (ISF-IM) had claimed responsibility for the attacks. Assamese police contacts told PolFSN that the ISF-IM may be another name for the Islamic Security Force of India (ISFI), which was formed in 2000 in Bodo tribal dominated areas to combat perceived anti-Muslim attacks. Chandranathan told PolFSN that the Assam police have not found any evidence that ISF-IM or ISFI were involved. Furthermore, he pointedly did not rule out any cross-border linkages. He was reluctant to share more detailed specifics of the investigation due to its ongoing nature and the insecure communications. He confirmed that on November 12, the Assam government requested the federal government's Central Bureau of Investigation to assume responsibility for the investigation into the attacks.

New Style of Explosives

¶5. (SBU) According to Assam police contacts, the attackers

affixed approximately 80 kilograms of RDX, ammonium nitrate and plasticizers to vehicles, motorbikes and bicycles. Police have arrested and detained eight individuals based on vehicle registrations connecting them to the vehicles used in the blasts. Three of the vehicles used in Guwahati were owned by Bodos. Police contacts told PolFSN that RDX is not locally available in bulk quantities and they have not previously seen the chemical composition of the explosives in Northeast India. Because of this, they suspect some external involvement in the attacks.

Comment

¶6. (SBU) While Assam police appear to have rejected the ISF-IM's claim of responsibility and are focusing on traditional Assamese insurgent groups, the complex nature of the attacks (timing, scale, geographic dispersion and chemical composition) indicates third party technical and logistical assistance. The GoI, however, has not yet publicly accused any Bangladesh-based extremist groups of assisting in the attacks. PolOff plans to travel to Assam in December to gain a better understanding of the investigation and the underlying communal tensions in the state.

PAYNE